

TOWN OF HARPSWELL
COMMUNICATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Meeting of March 3, 2009
Minutes

Committee Members Present: Alan M. Shaver
 C.V. Noyes
 David I. Chipman

Town Staff Present: Kristi Eiane, Town Administrator
 Melissa Moretti, Recording Secretary

The meeting opened at 4:00 PM at the Harpswell Town Office, 263 Mountain Road, Harpswell, Maine.

The Minutes of the November 19, 2008 meeting were approved.

It was stated that the proposed telecommunications tower project should be completed in about three months.

It should be noted that the Town of Harpswell has been in the process of negotiating a renewal of its Franchise Agreement with Comcast. An extension of the Franchise Agreement until May had been approved by Comcast.

From the November meeting, the creation of a map/overlay showing the number of homes/mile was discussed. Ms. Eiane said she would pursue the issue with Selectman Henderson and/or Carol Tukey, the Town Planner.

A State created model franchise agreement proposed for adoption by the State Legislature was discussed. The agreement would be designed to reduce legal costs for small towns, and should be available in June, 2009.

The issue of the franchise fee was discussed, which was estimated to be \$55,000 to \$60,000 per year. The number of Comcast subscribers in Harpswell was estimated to be 2000.

The Committee decided to consider using the State created model franchise agreement, and plug in such items as an extension policy, etc.

Ms. Eiane said she would ask Jay Somers of Comcast if there was a cable plate map in digital format, and also if it was in GIS format, so the Town could use that information to create a map/overlay.

Ms. Eiane said the Town had been getting some complaints from the community regarding Channel 9 (the TV Guide Channel), which had moved to a digital channel and would require a cable box to receive. It was noted that the Town was the local regulatory authority for Channels 2 through 14; however, this was not stated in the Franchise Agreement.

Mr. Chipman read from the Franchise Agreement, paragraph 25.4b which stated that Comcast would conduct annual polling of subscribers to discover program preferences. The Committee discussed suggesting to Comcast that the annual polling had not been done, to their knowledge.

It was noted that there were residents of Stevens Corner who wanted Comcast cable services.

It was decided that Ms. Eiane would call Mr. Somers and invite him to attend a meeting with the Committee members and the Town Administrator, Ms. Eiane, to discuss these issues.

Mr. Chipman said he would go to the Harpswell schools and to the local fire departments to make sure they were getting the Comcast service they were entitled to. He also said he would assess the budget for equipment for Harpswell Television, and would mention to Mr. Somers the possibility of an improved link with the TV station.

The meeting adjourned at 4:51 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Moretti
Recording Secretary